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Mark 14:32 - 14:72



Gospel of Mark - Steve Gregg

In this analysis of Mark 14:32-14:72, Steve Gregg examines the account of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Last Supper, the betrayal by Judas, and Peter's denial. Gregg also delves into the philosophical complexities of God's foreknowledge and human free will, highlighting the importance of remorse and repentance. Additionally, he examines the laws and proceedings of the Sanhedrin court and Jesus' foretelling of his coming glory, among other details. Overall, Gregg provides a thought-provoking exploration of important events in Jesus' life and their theological implications.

Transcript

So we pick up the story of Good Friday. Actually, this is Good Thursday night, but it's after dark, so it's already Friday in the Jewish reckoning. In Mark chapter 14 and verse 32, we have just come so far as to have had a brief treatment by Mark of the Last Supper and some of the things Jesus said on that occasion.

Much more thorough treatment of the same is given in John's gospel, or at least of some of the things. And actually, interestingly, John's gospel doesn't actually mention the institution of the Last Supper. Matthew, Mark, and Luke mentioned that this is my body, this is my bread portion.

John doesn't mention that portion. John assumes the readers know about that. And so he just talks about after meal when he washed the disciples feet and the discussion that we had goes on.

The longest of the recorded discourses of Jesus was given to the disciples in the upper room. But Mark leaves it out entirely, except that he does mention that Jesus predicted, A, that one of the disciples would betray him and B, that Peter would deny him. In fact, that all of them would forsake him.

That was predicted. And that was also that's part of the contents of the upper room discourse. But the rest of the contents in John, where Jesus told them that he's going away, but he'll come again.

And there's the Holy Spirit could be given to them and they'll be able to pray in Jesus name and so forth. These things that Jesus taught in the upper room discourse are not found in Mark or in Matthew or Luke. And so we have a very brief treatment of that evening here.

And now they've left the upper room and they've gone to a place where Jesus apparently was accustomed to going on certain evenings to pray privately. It says in verse 32, then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, sit here while I pray.

Then he took Peter, James and John with him and he began to be troubled and deeply distressed. Then he said to them, my soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch, which means stay awake.

He went a little farther and fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. Now, he took all of his disciples to the garden, but apparently left eight of them. Judas had already separated himself from him.

Eight of them he left apparently just within the gate of the garden somewhere. And then he took the other three, the inner circle, Peter, James and John. He took further into the garden and commissioned them to stay awake and pray with him.

Then he went a little further still and he prayed. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me.

Nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will. Then he came and found the disciples sleeping and said to Peter, Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready.

But the flesh is weak. Again, he went away and prayed and he spoke the same words. And when he returned, he found him asleep again for their eyes were heavy and they did not know what to answer him.

Then he came a third time and said to them, are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough. The hour has come. Behold, the son of man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Rise up. Let us go. See, my betrayer is at hand.

Apparently, Judas and those accompanying him were now visible. So between the time Jesus entered the garden and the time that Judas came with those who arrested him, Jesus apparently prayed three different times. Each time it would appear the disciples, Peter, James and John, all of them fell asleep, though they were told to stay awake.

This is really hard to explain. It was only an hour that he asked them to stay awake. Now,

I know sometimes it's hard to stay awake for an hour, but all three of them.

Maybe it was extremely late at night. And it is, by the way, easier to fall asleep when you're praying. Your eyes are already closed for one thing, but also because I think the devil particularly likes to interfere with prayers.

And he makes that he makes sleep seem very irresistible at times when you might otherwise be doing something effective for God, like praying. In any case, Jesus told them to pray that so that they would not enter into temptation. He didn't ask them to pray for him.

His prayers were for him. Although, according to John's gospel, he had spent a whole chapter, chapter 17 of John praying for his disciples before this. Apparently, on the way to the garden, he prayed for them that long prayer in John, chapter 17.

But now he gives this short prayer for himself. It might have been longer. He might have prayed three hours.

He might have left the disciples to watch for an hour with me. And then he went away and prayed for an hour and came back from the head and stayed awake. And so he went and did it again.

Kept saying, can't you stay awake for an hour? We don't know how long all this took. And someone said, well, how did the disciples know what Jesus prayed? I mean, his prayers are actually recorded here. How did they know what he prayed? My impression would be that they heard him pray these words before they fell asleep.

And not much more. They fell asleep rather quickly. This is the part they heard.

How much he may have prayed besides, we have no way of knowing since no one was there to record it. Although, of course, even if they didn't hear Jesus pray this, he might have reported this story to them. And his prayers and so forth at a later date after his resurrection, when he spent 40 days with them.

He may have told the story, but it seems more likely that they actually overheard him praying these particular lines. But it would only take about five seconds or less to pray those particular lines. If they fell asleep shortly afterwards, they couldn't tell you what he prayed beyond that.

But the gist of his prayer was that if it were possible, he would like to not drink the cup. He would rather not face the hour of suffering. And the cup that he was going to drink, no doubt, is to be understood as the cup of the world's sins.

And the punishment due for the world's sins was going to come upon his shoulders. You know, there have been men who have been crucified, tortured, lost their lives in various

unpleasant ways. Who remain somewhat calm and who managed to keep their composure.

Whereas Jesus, we're told in one of the Gospels, actually was sweating as it were drops of blood in great agony and great distress. Which may give the impression that he was not really able to face death himself with aplomb and with courage. After all, he had earlier said to his disciples, he that loses his life for my sake shall find it.

And now he's losing his life and is he kind of wimping out? That's what it might appear when, in fact, there are people, Peter himself, for example, when he was facing crucifixion, required that he be crucified upside down instead. I mean, he had that much determination when James, the first apostle to be martyred, was martyred. His head was cut off.

And the story goes that as he approached the block where his head was cut off, he he praised the execution. And, you know, he was, in other words, Jesus seemed to have much more turmoil over this than even his disciples later did. But the reason I think is this.

Jesus wasn't simply facing death to the Romans. It was just another routine crucifixion. They crucified thousands of people.

But to Jesus, it was bearing the sins of the world and the penalty for those sins. Most Christians would say that even included God turning his back upon him and that that was the thing about the punishment that Jesus dreaded most. That he was going to face the abandonment of God as no man had ever had to face it before because he was taking on that particular penalty.

Essentially all the penalties of hell in a few moments time or a few hours time were going to be brought upon him. There was more to it than just the physical pain and loss of life. He was expecting that.

He knew that was coming. He had been predicting it. So here he is just face to face with perhaps he's even beginning to have those sins put upon him.

We don't know at this time, but it's a hard thing for him. And he wants his disciples to pray specifically for themselves that they don't enter into temptation. He knew this was going to be hard for him, but it's very hard for them, too.

And he wanted them to get through it with their faith intact. Anyway, once he found him sleeping the third time, he kind of let him sleep. Go ahead.

It's OK. And then he said, oh, well, now we better get up because Judas is coming. And verse 43, it says immediately while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the 12, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and

the elders.

Now his betrayer had given them a signal saying, Whomever I kiss, he is the one. Take him and lead him away safely. Now notice it says there was a great multitude with swords and clubs.

These would not be in all likelihood any of the same multitudes that had viewed Jesus favorably on earlier occasions. The multitudes that he fed, the multitudes that followed his teaching, the common people who received him gladly and so forth. A multitude might be a few score or a few hundred people, but the people that were this multitude with clubs and swords and so forth, they would have been people sent by the chief priests.

They would have been people who were either their servants or at least sympathizers with them. And probably was the same multitude that was crying out for Jesus' crucifixion in the court of Pilate's courthouse. These were not just a sampling of the Jewish population because the Jewish population as a whole were not at this point hostile enough to Jesus to want to come out and arrest him.

They were more or less favorable toward him. So Judas had given them a signal, just so there's no confusion and you don't arrest the wrong person, I will go right up to the guy and give him a kiss on the cheek, which would be a normal greeting that people would give in those days. But Judas knew that the other disciples would be present.

And it's interesting that he not only was willing to betray Jesus, but to put his own friends at risk because he brought a multitude of armed people. Knowing that that could, you know, if the disciples, Judas probably knew that Peter wouldn't just take this sitting down. Knowing Peter's impulsiveness and knowing that Peter had a sword too.

Certainly Judas was putting his own friend Peter in a position of perhaps getting into an armed conflict with an overwhelming enemy of armed people. But then Judas may have resented Peter and James and John. Remember, they were the three who were given more privileges and maybe Judas resented them and didn't care what happened to them.

In any case, he didn't want Peter being the one arrested instead of Jesus. So he would, since not all the crowd there were familiar with Jesus, Judas would identify him unmistakably for them. And so as soon as he had come.

Immediately, he went up to him and said to him, Rabbi, Rabbi, and kissed him. Then they laid their hands on Jesus and took him. And one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.

Now we know that was Peter because John's gospel tells us that. But why does this gospel, which even comes from Peter, Mark is given as Peter's gospel. Why does it not

mention that Peter was the one you might think it's Peter trying to protect himself from the embarrassment, but not so.

Other embarrassing things Peter said and did are recorded in Mark's gospel. In fact, Mark's gospel tends to include the embarrassing things about Peter and to exclude from its record the positive things that Jesus said about Peter. That other gospels include, if anything, Peter in telling the story does not include the things that flatter himself and does include the things that make him look like a fool.

But on this occasion, his identity is obscured. Why? There's a possibility, at least, that Peter was still alive at this time. And that if it was on record that he had resisted arrest forcibly from an official arresting group, that there could be charges brought against him, even at this late date.

I mean, it'd be a written record of his guilt. Whereas John wrote after Peter was dead, you know, like they didn't could tell who it was who struck the high priest servant's ear off. Anyway, it's interesting that Peter is not mentioned by name as the one who did this.

And so he drew a sword and he struck off the high priest servant's ear. John knew that man and called him Malchus. Malchus was the high priest servant.

Probably the reason that John knew him. Well, there's two possible reasons. One is that John's gospel tells us that John was acquainted with the high priest family.

It's possible that some of John's relatives were Levites and that he had known the high priest family in his earlier life. And he might well have known the high priest servant Malchus by name. Or what strikes me as more possible, more likely, is that Malchus became a believer, became part of the church.

So by the time that this record was given, John and the other disciples knew him by name. And why wouldn't he become a Christian? Jesus healed his ear. The healing of the ear is not mentioned here.

But it is in Luke, I believe it is, if I'm not mistaken. One of the gospels, I think it's Luke, records that Jesus healed the man's ear. Verse 48.

Then Jesus answered and said to them, Have you come out as against a robber with swords and clubs to take me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching and you did not take me. But the scriptures must be fulfilled. Then they all forsook him and fled, just like Jesus said they would.

Now a certain young man followed him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young man laid hold of him and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked. And that's all we hear about that young man.

We discussed this in our introduction to the book of Mark. Perhaps you don't remember. Only Mark's gospel mentions this young man.

And it is a strange circumstance that he found himself in the garden in the middle of the night, dressed only in a bed sheet. That wasn't the way people generally went out for walks in public. Or, in fact, people usually didn't go out at night at all.

But if they did, they probably wouldn't normally just wrap up in a bed sheet and be naked underneath. Probably wear some clothes. But here we have a man who, for reasons that go unexplained, happens to be present with the disciples.

He's not one of the disciples. How did he get among them anyway? Jesus had had his upper room discourse and his meal with the twelve disciples. And then they went to Gethsemane.

Presumably most people didn't know that Jesus went there. They didn't know the place. How did this other person, not one of the twelve, end up there in the middle of the night? It's not likely he was just a gardener there.

The middle of the night is not when you do the gardening in the garden. A caretaker, maybe? Or was it Mark himself? Most Bible scholars assume that it was probably Mark himself. And that his recording of this is his way of saying rather vaguely, very unspecifically, that he also had abandoned Jesus when everyone else did.

So it's sort of his confession of his caving in in our crisis too. Now, why would it be Mark? Well, a scenario can easily be constructed that makes good sense. In fact, better sense than any other scenario that I can imagine.

That would make it Mark. We don't know in whose house the upper room was, where Jesus took the last supper. But we do know that there was a house in Jerusalem, which shortly after this, in the book of Acts, became a regular prayer place for the church.

An upper room, in fact, where they were when the Holy Spirit came upon them. A house which is referred to in Acts chapter 12 as Mark's mother's house was a meeting place for prayer meetings for the early church in Jerusalem. And although the passages do not tie these together with certainty, it is not at all impossible or even unlikely that Mark's mother's house, where there was a prayer meeting in Jerusalem in Acts chapter 2, may have also been the house of the upper room in Acts chapter 12, I should say, that it was the same upper room that the disciples were in in Acts chapters 1 and 2 on the day of Pentecost.

And that could easily be the same upper room where he took Passover meal, Mark's mother's house. Remember it says, when he described the upper room to the disciples, you'll find a room that's prepared for us, it says a large room. They had to have a place with a large room for the day of Pentecost because there were 120 people waiting there.

The identification is not certain, but it's not unreasonable to think that it may have been Mark's mother's house where the last supper was held. Now, Mark would not have been at the meal because he was not one of the 12. He was just a family member.

There's a good chance that the meal and the conversation upstairs went late, that Mark had gone to bed, was already in bed, undressed and under the sheets. He knew, of course, because his family were friends of Jesus, and they probably were discussing it all the time, that there were people wanting to get Jesus, wanting to arrest him. In fact, that he was in their house rather clandestinely because his presence, if it were known, could get the family and him into trouble.

And it may be that he was still awake at the time that Jesus and the disciples left the upper room and started going for Gethsemane, and that Mark's curiosity got the better of him, and he didn't want to let them out of his sight. So he didn't take the time to get dressed, he just grabbed the sheet that he was sleeping in and wrapped himself up and followed at a distance until he found that they'd gone to Gethsemane, and therefore he found himself in the garden at the time when the arrest took place. But not prepared for, you know, a social event.

Just wrapped naked in a bed sheet. But that when they grabbed him, they grabbed the sheet rather than him, and he fled away without any clothes on and probably went home again. That would be a scenario that works.

It associates the upper room then with Mark's home, and Mark therefore would be a man who, though not in the upper room, would have been in the house, probably, at the time when Jesus and his disciples left. And that he'd been in a bed sheet would suggest that he'd probably gone to bed already. But then he changed his mind and wanted to follow them.

That, to me, strikes me as a scenario that answers to all the data, and I don't know of any other scenario that answers even any of it. So that's the thing I think is probably true. Verse 53, Then they led Jesus away to the high priest, and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.

They were expecting Jesus. The chief priests were gathered with the others of their type. These were representatives of the Sanhedrin, the ruling court of Israel.

They didn't generally meet at night. As a matter of fact, the laws that had been accepted by the rabbis about protocol for the Sanhedrin forbade them to meet at night. A night meeting of the court was forbidden, probably because a night meeting of the court would be probably a kangaroo court.

You know, anything that is a just matter being brought before the court can be handled in daylight hours, where everyone can be available to hear and see what's going on. A

night gathering of the court usually means a hasty verdict is being sought under cover of darkness and when other people are not around to know about it. So there was actually a rule that the Sanhedrin was never to meet at night, but they broke the rules.

They broke a lot of rules in this particular event of finding Jesus guilty. And we find the high priest and the chief priest and the scribes, not all of them, because the Sanhedrin had some sympathizers of Jesus on it, and I don't know if they were invited. They might have been.

We know that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were members of the Sanhedrin, and they were sympathetic toward Jesus at this time. There may have been others. It's hard to know whether the chief priest had just invited a quorum enough to make a legal gathering of the court and made up of his hand-picked sympathizers or whether there were some of Jesus sympathizers there too, and that just couldn't be avoided, but the chief priest counted on the council to go his way anyway.

But it says the chief priest and all the council sought testimony. Oh, I'm sorry, we missed one thing. Verse 54, but Peter following him at a distance right into the courtyard of the high priest, and he sat with the servants of the high priest and warmed himself at the fire.

And the chief priest and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but found none. That is, they were looking for witnesses who could say they heard Jesus say something or saw Jesus do something that would be deserving of the death penalty. I'm not sure what they hoped to find.

They knew he didn't kidnap people, didn't commit adultery, didn't kill. What did they hope they'd find? Well, obviously, blasphemy would be the thing they'd most be expecting. In fact, there had been times, numerous times in Jesus' ministry, when people had taken up stones to stone him but didn't carry out the execution, but it was because he said things that they regarded as blasphemous.

The only capital crime they could ever hope that a righteous man like Jesus might be found guilty of in their eyes would be blasphemy. And so they'd be looking for witnesses who had heard him say things that were clearly blasphemous, but they couldn't find any witnesses who could say that he'd said blasphemous things. For many bore false witness against him, but their testimonies did not agree.

Now, apparently what it means is, as in a modern court of law, the witnesses are not allowed to hear each other's testimony. They have to come in separately and say what they know or what they say. And so they can't collude and they can't make sure they say the same things as each other.

And so they had various false witnesses willing to come in, probably, you know, friends

of the chief priest and so forth, willing to lie about Jesus. But they couldn't get them all to say the same thing. They hadn't really worked out yet what their testimony was going to be.

And so the court proceedings were breaking down. And some rose up and bore false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But not even then did their testimony agree.

So there were some who said sort of that kind of thing, but they got it different. They didn't all hear him right. What did he really say related to that? He said he told them destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.

He didn't say he would destroy the temple and build another one. So that was a false witness. They were saying that he was threatening to destroy the temple.

He did not threaten that. And therefore, since they were making it up, they didn't all make it up the same way. And the false witnesses couldn't even agree about what he said on that occasion.

By the way, I'm not sure that a man saying he would destroy the temple, but never doing it, could be accused of having said something that was worthy of death. They just weren't able to find anything that the testimony would all agree on. And the high priest, finally, because the witnesses had broken down, stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, Do you answer nothing? What is it these men testify against you? But he kept silent and answered nothing.

Again, the high priest asked him, saying to him, Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? Now, we have more information in Matthew on this than in Mark. He didn't just say, Are you the Christ? He said, I adjure you in the name of God, are you the Christ? And to adjure a witness was to put them under oath before God. When a person was adjured to testify to what they knew, it was a crime for them not to testify.

Under ordinary circumstances, a person could be silent in court, but when they're put under adjuration, they had to testify. And although it doesn't mention it here in Mark, Matthew does mention the priest said, I adjure you in the name of God that you tell me whether you're the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the Living God, the Son of the Blessed. Then Jesus spoke because he was put under oath in the name of his Father, and he honored his Father.

And Jesus said, I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven. Now, you will see this, the high priest, the Sanhedrin, they will see this.

It's possible he's here referring to the judgment that would come on Jerusalem and the

Sanhedrin would see Jesus vindicated in this manner. It's possible he's talking about his second coming at the end of the world, in which case they'd have to be raised from the dead to see it because they're dead now. And it's even possible that he doesn't mean it even as literally as of 70 AD.

Remember, Jesus said to Nathaniel, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man. Many scholars believe, I think they're probably right, that he didn't mean that Nathaniel would actually have such a vision, literally, but that Nathaniel's understanding of Christ would come to see him in that light. It would be as if he saw heaven opened and that Jesus was the one who connected heaven and earth upon whom the angels of God ascended and descended.

More like he's using a figurative reference to a truth, a reality, that Nathaniel would have revealed to him in time, but not necessarily that he'd see a vision of the heavens open, as Jesus said. Maybe. We don't know that Nathaniel ever had a vision like that.

He may have, but it's not necessary to interpret Jesus' words that way. He could be saying to Caiaphas, you're going to see me glorified. You're going to kill me, but you're going to see my movement live on.

I'm going to have power in this town, and you're going to see it happen. And it did happen after Pentecost. Or he could be referring to AD 70.

But anyway, he says, then the high priest tore his clothes and said, what further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think? And they all condemned him to be worthy of death. Then some began to spit on him and to blindfold him and to beat him and to say to him, prophesy.

And the officers struck him with the palms of their hands. The ones who did this are the soldiers to whom he was delivered briefly. It doesn't say so here in verse 65.

It just says some began to treat him this way. We're told in other Gospels that after the Sanhedrin declared him worthy of death, they sent him out to be taken care of by soldiers. While the Sanhedrin decided how they're going to make this fly with the Romans.

Because the Jews could not kill a man. The Romans forbade it. The Romans were ruling that region.

And although the Sanhedrin had some power to judge certain criminal cases, Rome had denied the Sanhedrin the right to execute a man. The Romans had to do that. And therefore, once the Sanhedrin had decided that Jesus had done something worthy of death, namely blasphemy, they had to figure out how to get the Romans to kill him.

Because the Romans couldn't care less about blasphemy. They had to come up with

another charge that would fly in the Roman courts against Jesus. Now they knew he hadn't done anything wrong.

So they had to think of a lie to tell about it. Because he had never done anything that would make the Romans angry. And we find that when they did bring him to Pilate, they did lie about him.

But they had to figure out what lie they were going to tell. They knew, they felt vindicated, we should kill him. He is a blasphemer, our law says a man who blasphemes should die.

But we can't tell Pilate that's the case, because he wouldn't care if anyone blasphemes our God. So we're going to have to deceive Pilate in order to get the will of God done here. Which this blasphemer should be killed and we can't do it because the Romans won't let us.

So while they deliberated among themselves of what charge to bring against him before the Romans. They had him out of the room being watched by soldiers. And they were the ones who put a crown of thorns on his head.

They were the ones who spat on him and said prophesy, tell us who beat you. They blindfolded him and so forth, put a purple robe on him to mock him and call him king of the Jews. So that which is described in verse 65 was done not by the Sanhedrin themselves, but by the soldiers who were keeping track of him while the Sanhedrin made further deliberations.

Now, there's several other ways besides what I mentioned in which the Sanhedrin broke protocol, even broke the rules of the court. There were certain established rules of jurisdiction of the court that had been established and practiced among the Jews. I mentioned the Sanhedrin having a meeting at night was among the things that were not legal under those rules.

Another thing was that if a man was on trial and the testimony of witnesses broke down so that they couldn't find two witnesses against the person. It was unlawful for the high priest who is the judge to cross examine the witness. If you couldn't, that is the man on trial, the accused.

If you couldn't get external witnesses to agree against him, the man cannot be harassed and harangued by the priest. And yet that's what happened. The witness, they couldn't find two witnesses to agree.

So the priest stepped in, high priest stepped in and said, now I drew you to testify against yourself. Are you the Christ? And another thing that was different is that he only testified that he was the Christ, the son of God. But there's really nothing.

There's no precedent in Jewish law for people being called blasphemers because they said they were the Christ. Many Jews claim to be the Messiah and a lot of the Jews, including probably religious leaders. Not only did not think they were blaspheming, but probably were sympathetic toward them.

There's no precedent for calling a man a blasphemer because he claimed to be the Messiah. And as far as the son of the blessed, again, that's just a term that could apply to the Messiah. So to call that blasphemy is a stretch.

But they didn't mind stretching. They were getting desperate. They couldn't find any legitimate charge to bring against him.

And so they had to really stretch and get him to say something that was not even in itself, you know, a blasphemy. But which they would then be able to refer to as blasphemy for their own purposes. Verse 66.

Now, as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servants, girls, servant girls of the high priest came. And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, you also were with Jesus of Nazareth. Now, when she saw him with Jesus, we don't know.

Possibly she was part of that multitude. She was a servant of the high priest. And no doubt, a lot of the multitude that arrested him were the servants of the high priest, like Malchus, the one who got his ear cut off was.

On the other hand, it's not that likely that they've sent female servants out to an arrest. Female servants usually were household servants, you know, who did things like cook and clean and stuff. It's not clear why she would have been in the Garden of Gethsemane.

She may simply have seen Peter and along with Jesus in town at some other time during the week. Jesus had been preaching in town every day for that week up to this point in public in the temple. She might have had occasion to see Jesus and see the disciples that were associated with him.

And she thought she recognized this as one of them. And he denied it. Saying, I neither know nor understand what you're saying.

And he went out of the porch, out on the porch and the rooster crowed. And the servant girl saw him again and began to say to those who stood by, this is one of them. The same servant girl, she wasn't buying his denial.

She was pretty sure that he was one of them. But he denied it again. And a little later, those who stood by said to Peter again, surely you are one of them.

For you are a Galilean. Your speech shows it. Apparently, Galileans had an accent that

was recognizable.

And his accent was Galilean. Of course, being from Galilee would not mean that you were a follower of Jesus. In the Passover season, lots of Galilean Jews were in town.

But the fact that he was Galilean and the fact that they thought they'd seen him with Jesus seemed to confirm that he was who they thought he was. But he began to curse and swear. I do not know this man of whom you speak.

And a second time, the rooster crowed. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him. Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.

And when he thought about it, he wept. One thing that's interesting about this is that Mark alone tells us that the prediction Jesus made was before the rooster crows twice, you will have denied me three times. The other Gospels record Jesus simply saying before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.

Now, there's no contradiction there. Mark just gives it clearer. It was a rooster crow that Jesus predicted.

But it was the rooster crowed a second time. The first time the rooster crowed was after the first time that Peter denied Jesus. And then there were two more denials and then the rooster crowed the second time.

It's as if Jesus gave him two chances to get it right. You know, to get it right before the first rooster crowed. The first time he had the opportunity to say, yes, I'm with Jesus.

And he denied it. He did the wrong thing. Then the rooster crowed the first time.

That was like a signal to Peter. It should have caught him. You know, like Jesus mentioned something about the rooster crowing.

And he also mentioned about me denying him. And that's one rooster crow. It's like the warning shot fired over my head.

And then there's two more times he still does it. And then the second rooster crow, you know, nails him. Because he realized, he remembers what Jesus said.

But it's almost as if Jesus gave him two rooster crows. Because the first one would warn him off in case he didn't want to make the mistake of denying him two more times. But Jesus knew what he would do.

Now that Jesus predicted this and it came true is one of the great problems. Theologically and philosophically about God's foreknowledge. Did Peter deny Christ by his own free will? Or was he predestined to do it? If he was predestined to do it, then what? Then God predestined him to sin and made him do it.

However, James says that no man should say when he's tempted, I'm tempted of God. For God cannot be tempted with evil. Neither does he tempt any man.

God doesn't tempt or make people sin. So, Jesus couldn't be the one who made Peter do this. It had to be Peter's free will.

If it wasn't Peter's free will, why would he even repent? He wouldn't be responsible. Peter knew that he had to repent. He wept because he realized that by his own choice he had done the wrong thing.

But Jesus predicted that he would do that. The question then is, how did Jesus know? Well, some say, well, God knows everything. Including the things we're going to do in the future.

I think he does. Some people think maybe not. Some Christians actually think maybe not.

They say, no, God knows everything. But things we're going to do in the future aren't things that can be known. They don't exist.

The things we're going to do in the future have not been done. And they might actually be done one way or another if we have free will. They're not set in stone.

God can know everything that is, they say. Because what is, is. And it can be known.

And God can know everything. But what is not, isn't. And therefore is not among the things that anyone, including God, can know.

Because they don't exist to be known. And what a man is going to do, who has free will and can do one thing or another. The particular choice he makes remains to be made.

It doesn't exist yet. And so, some say, it does not conflict with our doctrine of God's omniscience. To say that God cannot know for sure what decisions we will make in the future.

Because, they say, if God does know for sure what decisions we will make in the future, then we have to make them. It has to happen just the way God knows it's going to happen. Because if it happened any other way, then God didn't know.

Right? If God really knows that I'm going to do X tomorrow, then I'm going to do X tomorrow. It's not going to happen any other way than that. It's determined by God knowing it.

And I can't do anything else with that. Therefore I don't have free will. And if God knew I was going to do everything I was going to do, then I don't have free will about anything.

This is a philosophical problem that is raised. And many Christians, including Bible-believing Christians, have reached the conclusion that when we say that God knows everything, it doesn't mean He knows future decisions that are free-choice moral decisions. That's called openness theology when one denies that God knows those future decisions.

And they say, you know, this doesn't mean that God is not omniscient, because the things we're saying He doesn't know are not things. He does know everything. But things that haven't come into existence yet aren't things.

They're not knowable. And they say that to say that God knows everything, and we believe in God's omniscience, means that He has to know things that are absurd for Him to know, like things that really aren't determined yet. How could He know for sure what's going to happen when it's not determined yet? That's ridiculous, they say.

And they say it's no more an offense against the doctrine of omniscience than to say it's not an offense against the doctrine of omnipotence, the doctrine that God can do anything He wants to. Well, we could say He can't make 2 plus 2 equal 5. He can't make a circle be a square, they say. He can do everything, but He can't do absurd things.

He can't do things that are contrary to reality. He can do things that are consistent with reality, consistent with Himself. It even says in the Bible, God cannot deny Himself.

He cannot lie, the Bible says. He cannot be tempted. There are things that God cannot do because they're not consistent with His reality.

And therefore, although we would say God cannot make 2 plus 2 equal 5 because it's not true, and God can only do what's true, that doesn't mean we don't believe in omnipotence. It just means the doctrine of omnipotence has to recognize certain limitations that are limitations of logic. And they say the same thing is true about the doctrine of omniscience.

God knows everything, but He doesn't know about things that aren't. Because you can't know something that isn't. God can't know something that isn't.

Does God know about orange elephants living on Mars? I don't think God knows about those. You know why? Because they aren't there. They're not there to be known.

Does God know the choice I'm going to make tomorrow? Some say no, because it's not there. It doesn't exist. God can't know what doesn't exist any more than anyone else can because it's not in the realm of reality to be known.

That's what they say. That's the arguments of openness theology. But the problem they have, of course, is when they come to a story like this, where Jesus says, Peter, you're going to deny me in this time frame three times.

Well, did He take away Peter's free will? If He did, Peter is not responsible. A man doesn't have a will to do something or not do something. He's not responsible to do it or not do it.

You don't have any choice. You don't have any power. We have to assume Peter, like everybody else when he sins, sinned deliberately, sinned responsibly.

And yet Jesus knew He was going to do it. He didn't just know Peter was going to sin. He knew specifics about Peter's sin.

People who believe in openness theology when they're dealing with this story, they usually say, well, it's not so much that God really knows the future decisions but He knew Peter. He knew that when Peter was saying, Lord, I'll never deny you. Well, Jesus knew Peter's weaknesses.

Jesus knew, you know, Peter is, you know, he is self-confident beyond realism. And therefore, He knew that Peter wouldn't really be able to stand up under the test at this point in his life. Well, isn't that the same thing as knowing that Peter wouldn't do something or would do something? If Jesus knew Peter well enough to know what Peter would or would not do and could infallibly predict it five hours before it happened or six hours before it happened, could Jesus possibly know enough about Peter to know what Peter would do 12 hours afterward? 24? 36? Three weeks? If, in other words, God can perfectly see the trajectory of what we are and what influences are in our lives and what we've done in previous situations similar and all that, if God can take that trajectory and predict what we'll do five or six hours from now infallibly, where's the limit to how far out He can see it? I mean, essentially, if Jesus knew Peter was going to deny Him three times within the space of a few hours' time and then that Peter would repent, because that was predicted also in Luke's Gospel, I believe.

That's three moral decisions Peter had to make separately, plus a fourth one, the one to repent. Jesus knew He'd make them. He knew in what time frame He'd make them.

Now, if He knew that, then we have to say He knows what people are going to do before they do it. And to say, well, it was just a few hours later, so what? So what? If you can say with certainty what someone's going to do a few hours later, then where do you draw the line? How much later are you forbidden to know what they'll do? Where would be the limits of God's ability in this area? The Bible certainly places none. And therefore, although the Bible doesn't tell us how God knows the future, it does certainly imply that He does, including the choices people are going to make.

This case with Peter is an important test case on the question. So, does that mean that since Jesus predicted it, it was determined and Peter therefore didn't have any free choice about the matter? In one sense it seems so, because once Jesus predicted it, it really couldn't happen any other way without making Jesus a false prophet. I mean, what

makes a man a true prophet is that he makes predictions and they do come true because his predictions are informed properly.

Jesus knew Peter was going to do this. He wasn't just guessing. He made it very clear that this was certainly going to happen.

In fact, in verse 30 where he made the prediction, Jesus said to him, Assuredly, I say to you, that today, even this night, before the cock crows twice, she'll deny me three times. He didn't just say, I got a feeling you're going to cave in under pressure, although you're feeling quite self-confident at the moment. He said, I assuredly tell you this is going to happen in this period of time.

If Jesus could predict that assuredly and certainly then we have no basis for putting limits on anything that he can predict assuredly about the future. Now, I don't know how that works, because I do believe that Peter had free will. How God can foresee things that have not yet happened and they are still free to be acted upon, I don't know.

There's many things I don't know about God. But one thing I do know is that what he tells us about himself in the scripture is what he wants us to know. And he does definitely present himself as somebody who can tell the future, including future choices that people will make.

And so it is that we have this story of Peter fulfilling the prediction of Jesus and realizing afterward that he had done so and feeling very remorseful about it. And so that's a good stopping place because it's a chapter division. We'll come back to chapter 15 next time.